



# Western Work

Dec./Jan. 2018

Western Yearly Meeting of Friends Church  
Encourage, Support, Equip

## Gathering in Bethlehem

*Many people traveled to Bethlehem. There were travelers going to pay taxes, a young couple awaiting the birth of their first born, shepherds, wise men, and soldiers on a mission from Herod. Here is a meditation on those gathered in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, by John F. Mulholland:*

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We know nothing of these visitors to Bethlehem except this: they filled the inn. The glory of God passed by, and they knew nothing of it. "The star rained its fire and the beautiful sang for the manger of Bethlehem cradled its King" - but if they did know there is no record that they gave any heed.

If we should go to Bethlehem, would we go as the humble poor went long ago, or as the wise men who came from lands afar, or as the soldiers marching under orders? Ah, no. How strange it is that we who spend the most at Christmas, who sing the most carols, who give the most, who want to exalt the Christ the most at Christmas - that we would be the seekers of comfort, the prudent and the careful who would fill the inn to overflowing while the glory of God passes us by!

All the world must go to Bethlehem, though some shut the door to the Christ when they come. All the earth must go to Bethlehem even if some go but to slay the world's hope. All the world must go to Bethlehem, and some will find the world's wisdom there. All the earth must go to Bethlehem, for there is earth's hope. "Let us go even now unto Bethlehem." - - - - "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift." (2 Cor 9:15)

Bill Clendineng, *Between Me and Thee*", Plainfield Friends Church, Dec. 2018



## January

- 1** Office is closed
- 9** Property Trustees, 9:30am
- 11** Training & Recording, 1pm, Drake Rm
- 13** Peace Learning Center, 20th MLK Festival, 11am-3pm, CTS
- 14** Youth Invasion, Farm-land Friends, 5-8pm
- 20** WYM BOARDS
- 21** Annual Prayer for Christian Unity, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 6pm
- 24** Office Advisory Meeting, Office, 11am  
Looking Forward Task Force, Office, 1:30pm
- 27** Finance Board meeting, Kelly Rm, 10am

*View the year, 2017-18 to mark your calendars. Go to : [Westernyearlymeeting.org](http://Westernyearlymeeting.org)*

- April 17** Administrative Council, Fairfield Friends Meeting
- April 27-30** Western Yearly Meeting Spring Retreats, Quaker Haven Camp

I wish to apologize for the lateness of this newsletter. Because of some family crises, I was unable to pull things together. However, there were excellent writings in newsletters this past month that have inspired me, and I think will inspire you. Thank you all for your words of condolence and encouragement.

## Monthly Meeting Notes



Although it was Oct. 22, pastors gathered at Carmel Friends for an early Christmas celebration and study of the book “Who Stole My Pulpit.” It gave some insight on inspiring change in the church, and how to deal with road blocks.



**Bob and Hope Carter**, who work with SIM in Kenya, visited many meetings and gave the program at Administrative Council in Nov. They are once again proud in-laws. Just as they are about to return to Kenya, Nathan, their oldest, married Valerie on Dec. 28 in Dallas, TX. Congratulations!



Four pastors at **Noblesville First Friends**—Katherine Murray, David Adams, Rick Schoeff, and Worth Hartman.

**Noblesville First Friends 125th Anniversary**  
Former pastor, Rick Schoeff spoke. He was a pastor at Noblesville from 1996-2006. In his message he gave a short explanation of the word “religion”. Rick had researched and found that *religion* comes from the same root as *ligament*. *Lig* – that part of the word that they both share – means joining or binding together. I wondered if he knew the theme for Yearly Meeting Sessions in 2017 – Eph. 4:16, “from him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting **ligament**, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Rick pointed out that in our name, “The Religious Society of Friends” every word denotes connection – religious, society, Friends. We are in this together. We need to bind together, to bond, to move together to bring in God’s kingdom. This is a powerful message for us.



Christmas Eve Candlelight service.  
**Plainfield Friends Newsletter.**



**Bill Lange's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday** celebrated on Dec. 23 at Cumberland Trace. It was Bill's green thumb that grew the flowers gracing the front garden as you drove in the Yearly Meeting or Plainfield Meeting. Thank you for sharing with us, Bill.



Excerpt from "Stepping in the Light – Life in Joy and Power" by **Howard R. Macy**, 2007.

Bethlehem native and local Lutheran pastor Mitri Raheb writes:

"Christians have to take Christmas in Bethlehem seriously, because on that holy night and in this very place, God chose to be very concrete, to take flesh, and to take our world very seriously. We Christians [in Bethlehem] are unafraid to face the brutal reality around us because we believe in a power mightier than walls and put our faith in a peace that exceeds all human understanding." (Bethlehem Besieged, pp. 144-145)

Since I know that our brothers and sisters in Bethlehem steadily suffer violence and oppression, Raheb's bold words encourage me. So do George Fox' words to Friends enduring harassment and imprisonment: "Sing and rejoice, ye children of the Day and of the Light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt. ...the Lamb shall have victory over them all." (Epistle 227)



This 12/2017 posting in *Friend to Friend*, Indianapolis First Friends is from Leslie Kartholl's blog that she wrote in September. It seems appropriate to reflect on her words as we head into the Christmas week. Copied with permission.

At the same time Irma was bearing down on Florida, my daughter-in-law was in the hospital birthing our first grandchild. The family spent hours in the waiting room, pacing the floors, anxious for news, praying fervently for mother and child, trying not to stress out as the hours passed. When little Nora arrived, (my son texted "I'm sobbing, she's beautiful") palpable relief fell over the waiting room and the mood became anticipatory and excited. When we were finally able to see her, hold her, it was an incredible experience; the joy was encompassing and overwhelming.

The arrival of a much anticipated newborn is like a peek into the heart of God; for a few moments you feel that you "get it" - you understand life and love and everything makes glorious and beautiful sense. You feel like you are seeing things as they should be; it's a glimpse into the kingdom, it's the feeling that there is only goodness in the world.

Then the baby in question has a seizure. And then another one. And you remember that there are hurricanes; there are Irmas and Joses and Katias; there are earthquakes in Mexico and shootings in schools; that this is a world that is racked by wars and political unrest and senseless violence and you remember that the future is uncertain and scary. You lose that sense of "rightness" and everything just looks bleak. You worry, you fret, and you are back on your knees.

Despite the baby's issues, she is undeniably beautiful in her tiny little nearly nine pound self. Everything she does is amazing; every grimace, or blink, or smile transports you back to the eye of the hurricane. Outside the storm may be raging, but with Nora in arms, it is extraordinarily peaceful; the breezes are gentle, and you can see the stars. No matter what is going on "out there" for a few minutes everything seems to be exactly as it should be.

It's important to remember, especially when life is chaotically whirling about, blowing off our roofs and stripping our trees that the "eye" is also there; at the center of our existence, we can find that place of "peace that passes understanding" and comprehensive "rightness." We get there by prayer, by meditation, by being present in our lives, by self-sacrifice. We get there by relinquishing the control we imagine we have over anyone or anything but ourselves. We get there by opening ourselves up, by emptying ourselves out, and allowing God to fill that space with hope.



We get there by practicing love, by holding tiny Nora while Irma rages.



## Monthly Meeting Notes

### The Differences Between Quakers and Amish

Max Carter, Guilford College, Greensboro, NC, was a guest on Quaker Speak, <http://quakerspeak.com/differences-between-quakers-and-amish/>

Are Quakers Amish? That's a question that almost everyone who goes to Guilford College (where we're filming this today) gets. A number of my students will say when they find out they're going to a Quaker College, "Will we have to ride a horse? Will we have to give up electricity? Will we have to wear gray?"

What I often tell my students is the main difference between the Quakers and the Amish is that the Amish drive their own buggy; Quakers drive others buggy.

(Find more of this interview on Quaker Speak. Max was our Quaker History Lecture for WYM Yearly Meeting Sessions last year. His lecture can be found on [westernyearlymeeting.org](http://westernyearlymeeting.org))

From Downers Grove Newsletter, 10<sup>th</sup> Mo, 2017

### Quakers: Holidays and Holy Day—57th Street Friends

A traditional Friends' view that all days are equally holy has had Friends engage in a practice of not celebrating holidays like Christmas. While many meetings do not formally celebrate Christmas, meeting attenders as individuals often do. The December Second Sunday All Ages Religious Education Program (Sunday, December 10, 9:45-10:30 am) will be a time to explore the background, current practices, and our feelings about Quaker views on holidays and holy days. The Second Sundays All Ages Religious Education Program is a time for us to explore on a more deeper level our practices of faith, and includes time for one-on-one or very small group discussions on the program's topic. (Editor's note: When Doug and I got married, we had our own exploration of Quaker Holidays and Holy Days. I wonder how many of us have had that discussion.)



Do you know anyone interested in a Quaker Fellowship? **Quaker Voluntary Service** is a year-long Fellowship program in which young adults between the ages 21-30 live communally, work full time at social service and social change agencies, and explore themes of spiritual and personal growth with local Quakers. An ideal QVS

Fellow brings an openness to working with diverse community members, a willingness to explore questions of spirituality, and an ability to function well in a professional setting. Fellowships are available in Atlanta, GA, Boston, MA, Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN, Philadelphia, PA and Portland, OR. The program year is from August 26, 2018 – End of July, 2019. Interested candidates can find more information or apply by March 15, 2018 at [www.quakervoluntaryservice.org/apply](http://www.quakervoluntaryservice.org/apply).



The **Annual Prayer for Christian Unity, 2018** will be held on Sunday, January 21, 2018, 6pm At Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 3500 Graceland Avenue, Indianapolis. The theme for this year is "*Your Right Hand, O Lord, Glorious in Power,*" is taken from Exodus 15:16. The resources for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by an ecumenical team from churches in the Caribbean.



**Indianapolis First Friends** preparation for Christmas included a Children's portrayal of the Nativity, Young Friends party, and Vespers. Sixth lesson of Vespers: Mt 2:1-2. "In choosing to be born, God chose to be known by us." - Peter Chrysologus, 5th Century



**Plainfield Friends** gathering on Christmas Eve morning. Bill spoke on the "character of God's heart." The poinsettias were given in memory of those who passed on before



Before Christmas, Joe Cassady, pastor of **W. Union Friends**, followed the expectations of people throughout history waiting for the coming Messiah. He ended with Sallman's "Jesus Knocking at the Door" to point out that now the Messiah is waiting for us.



On December 13th, instead of the usual Joy Circle Meeting, **Carmel Friends** ladies and guests were treated to a lovely Tea followed by entertainment of Christmas favorites by the Silvernotes, the Hamilton County Extension Club Chorus. Rhonda Taylor and Nancy Childs are members of the chorus.



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## *Purpose*

WYM encourages, supports, and equips meetings and individuals to grow and share their faith in Jesus Christ as we seek the will of God through Scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, expressed in Quaker tradition.



Friends,

There was a time in my life that I stopped enjoying Christmas. It must have been in my early college years when the magic had disappeared and I saw the materialistic side of Christmas. The "I'm so thankful for what I have on Thanksgiving, but I'll knock you down to get the things I want on Black Friday." The "you give me a \$20 gift card and I'll give you a \$20 gift card" silliness. I was (and still can be) very cynical.

And then something happened.... I fell in love. To see the joy in Jessica's eyes as she opened a gift I had spent a lot of time selecting. And then something else happened. Oliver turned 3 and started to embody joy and excitement with more intensity as the days leading to Christmas morning approached. Now, I am the first one up on Christmas morning because I am excited to see the reaction of the kids as they anticipate opening their gifts.

Why do we like watching children on Christmas morning? I think it is because they are, for those moments, there. They are living in the moment. They are enjoying life to the full and it is infectious. For those moments, all the worries and stresses of life disappear and we are all just there. Wouldn't it be great if we could live like that all the time? Impractical, maybe, but something to aspire to!

I think that is what Jesus was trying to teach us when he said, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." (Matthew 6:34) He was telling us that life is short so don't waste time thinking about what is next on your checklist. Instead, be present in every moment. I pray that both you and I will be able to pause more often, stop thinking about what we have to do next, and be present to live in the moment.

Merry Christmas!!

Jon Newton, pastor, Kokomo First Friends, *The Friendly Visitor*

